DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 273 338 JC 860 495

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TITLE New Dimensions in Intercultural Education at Community Colleges.
PUB DATE 24 Oct 85
NOTE 9p.; Paper presented at the Conference entitled "Focus on the World: Meeting the Educational Challenge of the Future" (Bridgewater, MA, October 23-24, 1985).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Community Colleges; *Cross Cultural Studies; Foreign Countries; *Intercultural Programs; *International Educational Exchange; *International Studies; Study Abroad; Two Year Colleges

ABSTRACT

Even as community college instructors increasingly find their classrooms filled with students who lack the most basic knowledge about other countries, they are confronted with questions about the need for community college students to become involved in intercultural education. Changes in global economics, population composition, and international trade relations are answering these questions in a way that stresses the need for and relevance of intercultural programming at the community college. The challenge of intercultural education has been taken up by several community colleges across the nation. Lansing Community College in Michigan provides one of the most dynamic Study Abroad programs available in the nation, offering an opportunity for students to travel and study in Japan for nine months; the college also presents language instruction in eight non-English languages. Rockland Community College, in coordination with several other New York colleges, offers a Service Learning Program in England, Ecuador, and Caribbean nations. Massachusetts's international/intercultural consortium is currently attempting to obtain funding for a scholar-in-residence program, which will permit consortium members to host a scholar from India, China, and Kenya for short periods of time during the scholar's year-long visits. Community college educators in Massachusetts have participated in a national curriculum development project designed to prepare intercultural modules for existing courses. Several colleges sponsor their own study abroad programs. These efforts within Massachusetts and other states bear witness to the community college's recognition of its role in increasing students' knowledge and understanding of the world. (EJV)

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NEW DIMENSIONS IN INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION AT COMMUNITY COLLEGES

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A Paper Presented At

FOCUS ON THE WORLD:

Meeting the Educational Challenge of the Future

A Conference Sponsored By

Bridgewater State College,
Massasoit Community College
and the
New England Bilingual Special
Education Training Institute

24 October 1985

by

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The issue of intercultural education is crucial; unfortunately it is still regarded as a frill to the curriculum. The inclusion of cross-cultural content is not a major focus in Massachusetts, even with the new reform bill in education. At one time you and I could not escape cross-cultural education. Remember learning the obscure capitals of Latvia, Armenia and Dutch Guiana? They were far away places, yet we had to learn their names and their major industries, their cultures, customs and food. By the way, Latvia - whose capital was Riga, is now incorporated into Russia; Armenia - whose capital was Yeravan - is now divided among Turkey, Iran and Russia; and Dutch Guiana is renamed Suriname, capital is Paramaribo.1 The Dutch, while still influencing the country and its education, do not provide funding or governmental control today.

In 1985 geography is not taught in the schools of Massachusetts, and it hasn't been taught as a separate entity for many years. Thus, you and I have students in our classrooms who think that Cape Town is in the United States, that Beirut is in Germany, Camp David is in Israel and Gdansk is in Ireland. Jaime O'Neill, a professor at South Puget Sound Community College in Olympia, Washington, recently polled his classes on a variety of topics. Another amazing bit of information - Belfast was located in Egypt, Germany, Belgium and Italy. The above information was culled from questionnaires distributed to his students last spring.

At Bunker Hill Community College a map of the world was distributed to 375 students. The results were appalling. Students were asked to locate on the map the countries of Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chad, China, England, the Falkland Islands, Fiji - often mentioned as the Utopia of retirement - India, Japan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and West Germany. The results?

	% Correct	% Incorrect
Australia	62	38
Brazil	26	74
Canada	66	34
Chad	18	82
China	44	56
England	30	70
Falklands	23	77
Fiji	6	94
India	30	70
Japan	19	81
Lebanon	16	84
Saudi Arabia	23	77
West Germany	27	73

While these results may leave you shaking your head and wondering about education, you will be shocked to learn that the United States

was labelled as being the location of six of the twelve listed countries. West Germany was transposed to the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, South America and China. The Australians speak Portuguese, the Chinese speak Hindi and the Brazilians speak Cantonese.3

It is often asked why students at community colleges should be involved in intercultural education. Of course, they are not aware of the research just described. They seem to think that educational content is the same as it was when you and I went to school. And, they ask, why do 2-year students need intercultural education? They are only in school for two years; their education is career-oriented; there isn't enough time in their curriculum to include that kind of information; and community college students aren't mature enough to gain anything from a Study Abroad experience, much less cultural interchange with foreign-born classmates.

Addressing these issues is very clear. In two years of education many eyes can be opened to personal heritage as well as to other cultures. Career programs seem to NEED the intercultural programming even more than the Liberal Arts. We need only to examine our own economy to realize that fact. The Japanese have taken over our automobile market, the photography and telescope production, electronics; West Germany builds Volkswagon, Mercedes, Porsche and Audi, among others; even Yugoslavia has invaded the vehicle market. The Yugo has such a backup in import time that it may take a year to obtain one of those little, inexpensive cars. $4000 is a real bargain in auto purchases! Lamb comes from New Zealand; shoes are imported from Italy, Brazil and the Republic of China; textiles, formally the mainstay of our own state, come primarily from Japan and Switzerland, with India contributing its share.

How have these people "done this" to the invicible America? Rather - United States? We "forget" that America includes Peru and Uruguay, among other countries. They learned our culture, our values. They manufactured goods to meet our needs and did it inexpensively. They entered the foreign market - to offset the balance of trade and shipped goods to the United States. The Japanese have learned our business customs and, while not compromising their own values, have learned to operate in the arena of United States business enterprise. Is there any need to question the relevance of intercultural programming for career students? In our own city of Boston, signs in hospitals are at least bilingual. At Tufts/New England Medical Center they are in Chinese, yet the medical personnel are not required to learn any of the culture and values of the very population they serve - Chinatown. Human services students, one would propose, would know something of the community in which they work, but that would be the exception. Their courses in sociology are introductory and certainly not of any depth or breadth to be of use in the workplace. Hotel and restaurant personnel, those who serve tourists, have no inclusion of intercultural curriculum content in their programming. Yet it is incredible how we, as tourists, are treated in foreign lands.

To respond to the bias that community college students are not mature enough to benefit from a Study Abroad experience - a quote put forth just this past summer - this concept falls into the realm of old wives tales. The average age of community college students nationwide falls between 28 and 29 years.4 One would then logically question the maturity of the traditional 18-22 year old college student!

Certainly now that the stage has been set for the need and relevance of intercultural programming at community colleges, how is the challenge being met? Some of these new dimensions are very exciting, especially when you are given the opportunity to observe the impact they make.

At Lansing Community College in Michigan, one of the most dynamic programs in the country is available to all community college students. Dr. Philip Gannon, President of Lansing, has long been committed to international education. During a trip to Japan several years ago he was introduced to educators at similar two-year colleges. Ideas generated and the result was a 9-month program in Japan for United States community college students. The students are selected through application and interview. They travel to Japan and join Japanese students in a unique experience. Studying Japanese language and culture as well as enrolling in other courses, all of the students hold jobs on a cruise ship, THE MICHIGAN, which operates on Lake Biwa. The students are paid for the experience, which keeps the cost of their nine month program to approximately $1800. They live, work and study with Japanese students. The most difficult part of the program is returning to the United States. Saying good-bye is never easy.5

Lansing is extensively involved in many other programs. Language instruction is offered in 8 non-English tongues. Students from 40 countries study at Lansing Community College yearly. Of these, fifty come from Saudi Arabia to study Avionics and Airframe and Power Plant operations. Faculty from Korea come to LCC to Study Technology and Teaching methods, giving students a first hand experience of a foreign faculty member in the classroom.6

Lansing is by far not the only college. A number of colleges have joined with Rockland Community College in New York to offer a Service Learning Program in England, Caribbean nations and Ecuador. Community college students can travel to the foreign center for a semester, studying culture and language (when appropriate) and engage in a volunteer program in one of many agencies. Students in England have worked as tutors, as mental health aides, in hospitals. In Caribbean nations they have built libraries, worked in literacy programs. In Ecuador they have engaged in agricultural projects. All of these programs carry a full semester's credits. In addition to the academic credit and the work experience, the intercultural awareness from living in a foreign nation cannot be equivocated.7

Kirkwood Community College in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, offers Study Abroad Programs with career orientations. Students in Health careers visit Scandanavia and England, observing socialized medicine concepts and practices.

The Carl Duisberg Society of American and the Carl Duisberg Gesellschaft of West Germany joined with the President's initiative to establish an exchange program for community college students and students of vocational and occupational programs in West Germany. During the 1984/85 academic year, 43 U.S. community colleges hosted 84 West German young adults, while West Germany hosted 50 American students. The program is a year long experience, with students residing in family situations. The students study in the foreign counterpart of their home college for one semester and are interned with a business/manufacturing concern in their area of study for the remaining six or seven months. Among the West German students coming to the United States, there was a furrier, an auto mechanic, a banker, a renaissance glass maker, an optician, a travel agent. Of the Americans who went to Germany there was a professional photographer, a geologist, an architect, a robotics technologist, a museum gallery curator. The program experienced first year development pains during 1984/85 and was restructured for this academic year. Of all the states involved in the program, Massachusetts hosted the largest number of West German students. They were placed at Cape Cod Community College, Holyoke Community College, Greenfield Community College and Bunker Hill Community College.8

Humber College, Rexdale, Ontario, is so extensively involved in intercultural activites that a desk officer has been appointed for every continent in the world. They sponsor student programs, faculty exchanges, and most significantly, they endeavor to send their faculty to different corners of the globe assisting foreign nations in technical assistance projects. One of their most exciting projects involves a laboratory that travels, complete with truck, in a 13-foot crate. It has visited several of the Caribbean Islands. Humber supplies the faculty to conduct the training programs, having them return home with intercultural experiences to broaden their teaching in Canada.

What is happening in Massachusetts? We can be proud that this state has the only international/intercultural consortium with 100% of eligible colleges joining and participating in activites. All of the Massachusetts community colleges collaborated in forming the international education consortium/Community Colleges of Massachusetts. The consortium sponsored a conference last April which was well attended. They are currently supporting a grant proposal in which Massachusetts Bay Community College and Bunker Hill Community College are jointly applying to CIES for a Fulbright Scholar-in-Residence for 1986/87.

The proposal requests a scholar from India to teach two courses at the colleges, International Economics, and India: Its Social, Cultural and Political Systems. Consortium members have agreed to host the scholar on their campuses for short periods of time, offering speaking engagements to classes, faculty and the community. The overall plan is to have a scholar-in-residence for three successive years and from the countries of India, China and Kenya, all countries which are contributing to the immigrant population in Massachusetts. Following the visits of scholars, the colleges will submit a proposal for a USIA affiliations grant, which funds exchange of scholars between countries. These programs often lead to student exchange opportunities and ongoing relationships with community agencies.9

Dr. Ann Kelleher, Director, Pacific Northwest Consortium for International Education, Mass Grant - obtained funding from the United States Department of Education to support a state-wide curriculum development project. In the late 1970's over 80 community college faculty in Massachusetts participated in a project to develop intercultural modules for courses which they were currently teaching.10

Several of the colleges in Massachusetts sponsor their own programs. Cape Cod Community College has an Irish studies program of reknown, including annual excursions to Ireland, incorporating the experiential component with text education. Holyoke Community College has strong ties with Mexico and sponsors yearly programs during January to our neighbor country. At Berkshire Community College, a language professor corrals students each summer and takes them off to wonderful corners of France. Several of the community colleges are members of CCIS, a consortium which sponsors Study Abroad Semester Programs and short-term study tours in foreign lands. Bunker Hill Community College has established its own campus in London, with a program open to all college students who have successfully completed College English I and have 9 additional credits. This program is an integrated one of Government, Politics, Sociology, Humanities and Career Education. A Bunker Hill Community College Faculty member accompanies the students and courses are jointly taught by BHCC and British faculty. Administrative and faculty exchanges are common throughout the state, and certainly throughout the nation.

These programs not only offer intercultural experiences for students but staff development opportunities for faculty and administration. After hearing of these programs - and these are only a drop in the bucket to what is offered at community colleges in the United States - what can we do? Where do we go from here? The state of Florida reacted to the 1979 Presidential Commission on foreign language and international studies in a unique way. The commission called for a return to foreign language instruction and requirements, and also recommended that:

> "Undergraduates be given a greater insight into foreign societies and international issues. To this end the

> commission recommends that 2-3 courses be required in international studies for all bachelor's degree candidates; foreign language requirement; the integration of international or comparative perspectives in the teaching of most undergraduate subjects; expanded opportunities for faculty to acquire or strengthen foreign language and international skills; expanded institutional commitment to undergraduate international studies --- among other requirements."11

Several colleges in Florida have adopted intercultural components into rquirements for graduation, Broward Community College among them. Broward Community College has responded to the presidential challenge by requiring 6 credits of international/intercultural coursework from the general education requirements in order to obtain a degree.12 This lead has been followed by other colleges in Florida as well.

In August, 1985, Dr. Gerald Burke, President of Massasoit Community College, suggested that there should be a state-wide office of international/intercultural studies in Massachusetts, at least for the community college system, and he continued to suggest a method of funding for this coordination. Ideally this would be expanded to include all of the state colleges as well, as they are also in need of intercultural studies. Perhaps the time is right for a system-wide project of this kind for the higher education system as a whole.

Several topics have not been included in what I have presented, namely global issues of population, war and peace, food and famine, refugee education, English-as-a-second language programming. I have also not addressed at all the foreign students in the classroom, nor have I mentioned the marvelous ways in which foreign and refugee students can be integrated into regular program offerings. They are such a rich source of assistance and we more normally ignore them rather than validate their existence and worth. The Boston Center for International Visitors, the local of the USIA-funded Meridian House, includes community colleges in the itineraries of many foreign educators. Establishing linkages and cooperating in projects of mutual endeavor - human, technical and academic, - increase world understanding.

Last spring at the annual conference of the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges, Dr. Ernest Boyer commented that the world is no longer a world community - a novel idea in United States curriculum - but is a world economy. We must meet the challenge of world (international) knowledge, lest we cease to be part of that world community and economy.13

In our quest to meet the challenge - perhaps as a state we can accomplish some creative programs.

FOOTNOTES

1 Hammond Medallion World Atlas, (Maplewood, New Jersey: Hammond, Incorporated, 1979), p.1.

2 Jaime M. O'Neill, "No Allusions in the Classroom." Newsweek, 23 September 1985, p. 14.

3 Brenda S. Robinson. "Geographic Student Knowledge, 1984." (Unpublished research, Bunker Hill Community College, Boston, Massachusetts, 1984).

4 The Chronicle of Higher Education (Washington, D.C., Page 34).

5 Philip J. Garron. "Lansing Community College," Community and Junior College Journal, 55, No. 4 (1984-85) p. 64.

6 Ibid.

7 Rockland Pamphlet, Rockland Community College, The Partnership for Service Learning, (Suffern, New York: Rockland Community College, 1985).

8 Sharon Bannon and Michael Kraemer, "In Someone Else's Shoes." Community and Junior College Journal, 55, No. 4 (1984-85), 39-44.

9 Brenda S. Robinson, Fulbright Scholar-in-Residence Proposal (India). Bunker Hill Community College, Boston, Massachusetts, (1985).

10 Ann Kelleher, U.S. Office of Education Curriculum Development Proposal. North Shore Community College, Beverly, Massachusetts, 1977.

11 President's Commission on Foreign Languages and International Studies, "Strength Through Wisdom: A Critique of U.S. Capability." (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1979), p 16-17.

12 William Greene, "Area 8: The International/Intercultural General Education Requirement,"Community and Junior College Journal, 55, No. 4 (1984-85) p 18-22.

13 Ernest L. Boyer, Key Address, American Association of Community and Junior Colleges Convention, San Diego, 14 April 1985.

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OCT 17 1986